



# Zoo Vocabulary



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Adaptation	genetically determined specialization of an animal's physical structure or behavior which helps the animal survive
Altricial	offspring born immature and helpless, requiring extensive care during growth and development (birds, carnivores, primates, etc.)
Amphibian	a cold-blooded, smooth-skinned vertebrate such as a frog or salamander that hatches from an egg with gills then transforms into an adult with air-breathing lungs.
Arboreal	living in trees and traveling mainly among tree branches
Binocular vision	seeing with two eyes that have an overlapping field of view; see stereoscopic vision
Bipedal	moves upright on two feet (e.g. humans)
Biome	a group of areas with similar climates, weather patterns, seasons, and vegetation (tundra, rainforest, etc.)
Behavior	any action performed by a living thing; anything that an organism does involving an action or response to stimulation
Brachiation	movement by use of forelimbs/arms, swinging from one handhold to another in trees (e.g. gibbons)
Bushmeat	the meat of African wild animals (illegal commercial bushmeat is one of the most serious threats to animals in Africa, exacerbated by logging and construction projects)
Canines	four sharp, pointed teeth located between incisors and pre-molars
Canopy	upper level of forest trees
Camouflage	the color and patterns of animals' skin, feathers, or fur which makes them harder to see when in their natural surroundings
Carnivorous	feeding on other animals; flesh-eating
Crepuscular	active at dawn and dusk
Climate	how the atmosphere behaves over relatively long periods of time; the prevailing set of weather conditions in any place
Competition	the struggle between two or more living things using the same limited resource
Conservation	a careful preservation and protection of something, especially planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect
Defenses	the methods or characteristics a living thing has to protect itself
Dimorphism	the existence of two different forms of a species in the same population; different color (dichromatism) or size (sexual dimorphism) in animals and birds
Disruptive coloration	color patterns that break up an animal's outline— e.g. spots, stripes— often making individuals harder to discern in the wild
Diurnal	active by day

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Enclosure	the man-made habitat of an animal in captivity
Endangered	in peril or danger of extinction as a species
Enrichment	Providing challenging, stimulating, and beneficial activities, environments, and objects for Zoo animals; toys (made without tape, glue, or chemicals), habitat design, sensory awareness, increased food variety and foraging opportunities, interactivity, training and handling
Environment	the total conditions in which an organism exists (climate, terrain, food, light, presence of other living organisms)
Extinct	plant or animal species that no longer exists
Evolve	to change over a long period of time, through many generations
Feature	a part of the body
Foveal vision	capable of eye contact, focus, and acute sighting
Great apes	the gorillas, chimpanzees, and bonobos of Africa, and the orangutans of Southeast Asia; the largest apes
Groom	the cleaning of one animal by another (this seems to strengthen social bonds in some primate species)
Habitat	a place that contains all the nutrients, water, shelter, and resources that an individual needs to survive; the place in which an animal or plant normally eats, drinks, sleeps, and moves around
Herbivorous	eating plants, leaves, and vegetation
Ischial callosities	thickened, hairless areas on either side of the rump (e.g. macaques, baboons, etc.)
Keeper	individual that cares for animals by providing all the care required to maintain an exotic animal in a healthy, caring environment (cleaning quarters, providing enrichment, feeding, etc.)
Lemur	arboreal primates now confined to Madagascar that are related to monkeys; resemble monkeys in general form and habits but usually have a fox-like muzzle, large eyes, woolly fur, and a tail which is sometimes rudimentary but is usually long, furry, and never prehensile
Lesser apes	the gibbons and siamangs of Southeast Asia; the smallest apes
Locomotion	the act of moving from place to place (swim, jump, walk, etc.)
Macaque	any of numerous short-tailed, Old World monkeys of Macaca and related genera having distinctly ischial callosities and usually tufted eyebrows
Mammal	a class of warm-blooded, usually hairy animals, that feed their young with milk secreted by the mammary glands of females



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Monogamous	Having only one mate at a time (often misinterpreted as 'mating for life')
Niche	the place or role occupied by a species in the community structure of which it is a part; the way in which an organism utilizes its ecosystem
Natural selection	the survival of individuals or groups who are best adapted to their environment; this process perpetuates desirable genetic qualities and eliminates undesirable ones
Nocturnal	performing most actions (feeding, breeding, etc.) at night
Omnivorous	feeding on a variety of different foodstuffs, both animal and vegetable
Opposable	one finger or toe capable of being placed against one or more of the remaining digits; used to grasp in the manner of a human thumb
Palmigrade	walking with the palm of the hand down on the ground (e.g. apes)
Permafrost	permanently frozen subsurface layer of soil occurring throughout the Polar regions
Precocial	offspring capable of a high degree of independent activity from birth (prey animals such as zebra, bison, antelope, deer, giraffe, etc.)
Prehensile	adapted for seizing or grasping, especially by wrapping around, e.g. tails of some New World monkeys
Predator	an animal which must hunt other animals for food
Prey	an animal which is hunted by other animals for food
Prosimian	a lower primate; includes lemurs, lorises, tarsiers, and many fossil forms
Quadrupedal	moves with all four limbs for locomotion
Temperate	having a climate which does not get extremely hot or cold
Terrestrial	of or relating to land as distinct from water or air; living on, or in, or growing from land
Territory	the space within an animal's habitat that it actively defends
Stereoscopic vision	the ability to see things in three dimensions; allows for depth perception; see binocular vision
Vestigial	a small or imperfectly developed body part or organ that remains from one more fully developed in an earlier stage of the individual, in a past generation, or in closely related forms